

KOLCHAK'S OWN STORY OF COUP THAT MADE HIM DICTATOR TOLD AT SIX-DAY TRIAL THAT RESULTED IN HIS EXECUTION

SIBERIAN VENTURE NOW REVEALED AS INTRIGUE OF ALLIES

Overthrow of Directorate by Russian Admiral Followed Dramatic Playing of "Czar's Hymn"—Wholesale Executions That Followed Plot Engineered by British General Knox Aroused Russians in Favor of Bolsheviks—Kolchak, Whom England and France Were on Verge of Recognizing, Made Fatal Flight.

THE Washington Times presents herewith the real, hitherto untold story of Admiral Kolchak; how he was made dictator of Siberia by the allies in the hope of crushing the Soviet government, his meteoric career, his capture by the Bolsheviks, and his tragic death. It is virtually Admiral Kolchak's own story. The narrative is compiled from stenographic notes made at the six-day trial of the ill-fated dictator, in which he told frankly the full details of his perilous adventures. The notes were obtained by Karl H. Von Wiegand, staff correspondent of the New York American at Berlin, from Czechoslovakian officers and the Czech stenographer at the trial, who smuggled out of Siberia the official transcript of the testimony. These notes were thereafter translated and edited by Herman Bernstein, the celebrated international journalist. Mr. Bernstein was in Siberia at the time Kolchak was proclaimed dictator, and supplies important data to simplify Kolchak's own narrative.

This first article, strangely enough, is given to the world almost four years to the day since the overthrow of the Kerensky regime and the establishment of the Soviet government of Russia, which has held power since, and three years since Admiral Kolchak, by a coup d'état, on November 18, 1918, engineered by the British General Knox at Omsk, was proclaimed dictator.

By HERMAN BERNSTEIN.

THIS is the story of the last days of Admiral Kolchak, the "dictator" of Siberia. For a time he was the white hope of both the Russian liberals and the reactionaries outside of Russia. In the foreign offices of some of the allied powers he was looked upon as the only savior of Russia from the hands of the Bolsheviks. He was almost recognized by the allies during the peace conference.

Then suddenly, after a series of exaggerated victories, came his collapse as a military force, his flight, his trial by a revolutionary commission, and finally his execution.

With the passing of Admiral Kolchak ended the period of military dictatorship in Siberia. Siberia was thrown back into the arms of the Bolsheviks by the untold repression and terrorism practiced under the Kolchak regime. Here and there new anarchy broke loose as a result of the crimes of the various chieftains and adventurers of the Semyonoff and Kalmikoff type, masquerading as Russian patriots.

Made Dictator by Coup

The story of the end of Kolchak is intensely dramatic. It sheds new light on the history of the clumsy and futile policy of intervention through which allied military experts and statesmen have helped to keep Russia in a state of chaos and confusion, thus practically bringing on the present tragic plight of the Russian people, with King Hunger stalking mercilessly over the great land so rich in food and natural resources.

Admiral Kolchak was only a marionette in the hands of monarchist officers and schemers for the restoration of the Romanoff dynasty, a weak-willed tool of some of the allied military representatives in Siberia. Perhaps well-meaning at first, eager to save Russia according to his own lights, he was a pathetic little dictator who did not know how to dictate and he helped to ruin Russia instead of saving her.

I was in Siberia as a war correspondent when Admiral Kolchak was made dictator by a serio-comic coup d'état shortly after the armistice—on November 18, 1918. On armistice day I interviewed the president of the Directorate, Nicholas Avxentseff, and Vladimir Zenzinoff, a member of the Directorate, in Omsk. The Directorate was the government elected by the people, by the representatives of the Constituent Assembly who had gathered in Ufa.

It was indeed the most representative government Russia has yet had. Though practically all parties were represented in the government, most of the cabinet members belonged to the Socialist revolutionary party, and the policy of the government was liberal, democratic and anti-Bolshevik. Nevertheless, some of the military envoys in Siberia regarded the directorate as too radical. They feared that it was too close to the Bolsheviks in its sympathies, and therefore they bent their efforts to undermine the government's influence and finally to overthrow it.

British Hand in Plot

General Knox, the military representative of Great Britain, and Admiral Kolchak was his choice for dictator. The head of the Czechoslovak army in Siberia, the young General Galda, was in sympathy with General Knox's plan and sup-

ported the idea of a military dictatorship at first.

The Czechoslovak council in Siberia, on the other hand, criticized the coup d'état and pointed out that the overthrow of the democratic government by means of violence and the naming of a dictator weakened rather than strengthened the anti-Bolshevik front.

The American forces sent to Siberia remained about 5,000 miles away from the front. When I crossed Siberia and came to the front, at Ekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk, I found there just one American officer, Major Slaughter, who was traveling about as a military observer.

On the way across Siberia I saw many old men, women and children, starving and freezing refugees, drifting aimlessly, huddled together in cold and filthy box cars. I saw many hungry and ragged refugees living in caves underground, in the outskirts of the Siberian capital, Omsk. I also saw poorly-clad small detachments of Italian, French and British troops here and there, in Harbin, Manchuria and Omsk, on their way to the front which was held at that time by the Czechoslovak troops.

Everywhere I was told about the monarchist machinations of the former Russian officers and various adventurous self-styled Hetmans. Shortly before the armistice Admiral Kolchak, who was then minister of war in the Siberian government, called on the president of the directorate, M. Avxentseff, and informed him that the British military representative, General Knox, had arrived in Omsk. He suggested that President Avxentseff call on the general to pay his respects, adding that the general could be very useful to the government.

"I am the president and it seems to me that it would be no more than right that the military representatives accredited to this government should call on the president first," replied M. Avxentseff.

Admiral Kolchak agreed with the president and said that he would arrange to have General Knox call on M. Avxentseff first.

On the following day General Knox called on President Avxentseff.

General Knox said: "Mr. President, I should like to know why you have not yet ordered the shooting of Victor Chernoff."

"I am amazed that you should ask me such a question," replied M. Avxentseff. "Why do you think I should have ordered the shooting of Chernoff?"

"Because Chernoff is undermining the morale of the army at the front by his revolutionary proclamations. In time of war a man who would do the things Chernoff is doing would have been shot in England. And to maintain military discipline you should have him shot," declared General Knox.

"Pardon me, general," replied President Avxentseff. "I must express my amazement again. I am astonished that you should come to me with such a request, particularly since I have not heard you express any criticism of the scandalous conduct of some of the monarchist officers who have repeatedly and openly manifested their Chartist tendencies by singing 'God Save the Czar,' and who are thus really undermining the morale of our army. I understand that you were present on several occasions when such incidents occurred, and I have not heard any complaint from you on that ground."

"May I suggest, general, that you leave the Chernoff matter to this government? We will deal with it as we see fit. This is an internal affair, and I understand that the Allies have given assurances that they have no intentions of interfering in any way with the internal affairs of Russia."

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ILL-FATED DESPOT



ALEXANDER KOLCHAK, dictator of Siberia, whose dramatic rise to power culminated in his execution following his reign of terror among the peasants of Russia.

Czar's Hymn a Spark

On November 18, 1918, a short time after this conversation between President Avxentseff and General Knox, the government of the people, the Directorate, was overthrown. The coup d'état started with an episode which in itself seemed trivial, but it resulted in the overthrow of the government and the naming of the dictator.

A detachment of French troops arrived in Omsk several days after the armistice. I saw the splendid reception that was accorded them upon their arrival. The station was decorated with Allied flags. A military parade took place and enthusiastic speeches of welcome were made. The Cossack regiment, commanded by Colonel Krasnikoff, the Cossack chief, met the French troops at the railroad station and the Cossack hurrahs resounded hilariously over the Siberian capital.

The officers of the French detachment were entertained by the Russian officers at a banquet the following evening. The civil authorities arranged to give the French an official reception a day or two later. At the military banquet in honor of the French officers were the allied consular and military representatives. After the dinner the allied representatives were called upon to speak.

The Russian toastmaster led the speeches by an enthusiastic toast in praise of France and England. The Allied representatives also lauded the valor of the French troops, when suddenly the speeches were interrupted by the playing of the old Russian national hymn, "God Save the Czar."

The guests became confused and embarrassed. Some of the Allied representatives asked the toastmaster for an explanation. His answer was that the incident was of no political significance and that the Czar's hymn was played by the

band in all probability because there was no new popular national hymn as yet.

But after a brief pause the band resumed playing the Czar's hymn, repeating it six or seven times. The Czechoslovak representative, Captain Koshek, rose and said that as the representative of a democratic army he could not remain at the banquet any longer. He walked out demonstratively. Then some of the Allied Consuls also left the hall. Finally, even the French officers walked out, as by that time the affair assumed the character of a scandal.

Later it was learned that Colonel Krasnikoff, the Cossack chief, and several of his officers, had forced the band to play "God Save the Czar" at the point of their revolvers. The musicians, pale and trembling, kept their eyes on the

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gun as they played the old Russian national hymn.

On the following morning the Allied consular representatives held a hurried conference, and, without communicating with their governments, sent an ultimatum to the Directorate. They demanded an explanation of the incident within twenty-four hours. This precipitated the crisis.

The Directorate called a special conference for the purpose of considering the incident and the Allied demand. It was decided to place under arrest Colonel Krasnikoff and the officers involved in the scandal and to have them court-martialed. The order was issued for their arrest immediately at the close of the conference.

But Colonel Krasnikoff and the reactionary officers were prepared for the overthrow of the government. That night they surrounded the house of the president of the Directorate, where members of the government were in conference, and placed the head of the government and his associates under arrest. They forced the members of the Directorate into motor cars, led them away under military convoy and imprisoned them.

Before dawn several members of the government hostile to the Directorate met and Kolchak was named dictator.

The members of the Directorate were soon released on the condition that they leave Siberia immediately. They were sent to Manchuria in a special train, under British guard, and were compelled to sign a paper to the effect that they would not engage in any agitation against the Kolchak government.

Immediately after the members of the Directorate had been banished a farcical trial was staged by Kolchak. The officers who had arrested the members of the government were assured immunity. All sorts of absurd charges were invented against Avxentseff and Zeninoff in their absence. They were accused of having been in conspiracy with the Bolsheviks, of having received 200,000,000 rubles from the Bolsheviks for propaganda, of having plotted to betray the army to the Bolsheviks. The trial, of course, ended in clearing the monarchist officers and in a violent denunciation of the members of the deposed Directorate.

Chernoff Arrested

General Galda, head of the Czechoslovak army in Ekaterinburg, at his headquarters located in the Yefremyev house where the Czar was killed, told me that he was in favor of Kolchak because he was convinced that only a military dictatorship could save Russia. But the Czechoslovak Council on that same day issued a statement denouncing the overthrow of the Directorate by violence.

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VILLAGES LOOTED BY DICTATOR'S OFFICERS IN REIGN OF TERROR

Men and Women Were Flogged in Market Places While Allied Statesmen Sought Official Recognition for the "White Hope" of Russia—Offenders Were Put to Death on Such a Tremendous Scale That Peasants Feared Bolsheviks Far Less Than They Did "Monarchists" Who Threw Swords Into Scales of Justice.

regime came in the beginning of 1920. The dictator fled with a number of members of his staff.

On January 15, at about 7 o'clock in the evening, Kolchak and his staff were arrested at the railroad station of Irkutsk by a special revolutionary commission.

The commission arrived in automobiles at the shore of the Angara river and crossed the frozen river on foot. On the other side was the Kolchak train, consisting of three special cars and a refrigerator. The commission was met by the Czech commandant of the train, Borovitch, who conducted them to the car occupied by Admiral Kolchak and the officers who accompanied him. The Czech commandant briefly and calmly informed Admiral Kolchak that this commission represented the Revolutionary Political Center.

Kolchak became greatly confused, and was ill at ease for awhile.

Calm at His Trial

Then, realizing that the last act of his political career had arrived, he mastered himself quickly and remained calm throughout the period of his trial, and during his execution. The commission entered the next car where they found the premier of the Kolchak government, Pepelyayev was morose and utterly dejected.

Soon the revolutionary commission ordered the troops to guard the train. A company of workmen and peasants surrounded the train quietly and in orderly fashion. Admiral Kolchak and Premier Pepelyayev were taken to the station, where they were subjected to a thorough search. While Kolchak was being searched, a woman named Anna Timirova appeared and offered to share Kolchak's fate, begging for permission to follow him to prison. The woman was also placed under arrest.

The commander of the national revolutionary army, Nesterev, gave the order, and surrounded by a detachment of revolutionary troops, Kolchak, Pepelyayev and Anna Timirova, started their march across the icebound Angara river. The remarkable procession moved slowly along the narrow path over the ice. There was the abandoned dictator who had suffered a complete fiasco, the man who but yesterday was called the "Supreme Ruler of Russia," now a prisoner, and beside him walked the representatives of Russian democracy.

In the frosty air of a quiet winter midnight the pathetic figures of Kolchak and his associates appeared as symbols of the crumbled reactionary adventure that left behind a terrible trail of bloodshed.

On the other side of the river automobiles were waiting for the prisoners. The dictator and his premier were placed in separate cells. The heavy doors of the Kolchak cell closed behind him shortly after midnight.

The dramatic story of the last six days of the Kolchak trial, during which he gave his testimony before the revolutionary tribunal, defending himself and his regime, revealing the part played by the Allies in the Siberian intervention, is contained in the stenographic report which was secured for The Washington Times by Karl von Wiegand, the New York American's correspondent in Berlin, from Czechoslovak officers and the Czech stenographer who was present at the trial, and who succeeded in smuggling out of Siberia a transcript of the remarkable testimony.

The following articles will contain Admiral Kolchak's own dramatic story of his rise and fall, as given by him in his sworn testimony before the revolutionary tribunal in Irkutsk several days before his execution.

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